

than ever before own their own businesses, and that's a hopeful statistic and an important signal that the American Dream is reaching beyond certain segments of our society.

Part of ownership is for people to own their own homes. I love the idea when somebody opens up the door of their house and says, "Welcome to my home; welcome to my piece of property." In 2002, Alphonso and I set a goal of having 5.5 [million]^{*} new minority homeowners by the end of the decade. Since we set that goal, the number of minority homeowners has increased by 2.6 million. We're on track to reach our goal. Minority homeownership in the United States of America is at an alltime high.

As we celebrate African American History Month, we remember and thank the many African Americans who are defending our ideals as members of the United States Armed Forces, some of whom are with us here today. I thank these courageous men and women who are risking lives to protect us, to preserve our liberty. By bringing the promise of freedom to millions across the world, they are laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. God bless.

Service is a value that we all share, and today I am proud to recognize five citizens who are setting an example for all our fellow citizens. The President's Volunteer Service Award is the highest level of commendation a President can give in recognition of those who have contributed their time and their talent and their energy to helping others.

Today we honor five such souls who are working to improve their communities and help their fellow citizens. Each of them has heard a call to serve something greater than themselves. By answering that call, you are inspiring others to do the same.

The volunteers we recognize today are Carl Anderson from Washington; Karl'Nequa and Katie Ball from Jackson, Mississippi; Steve Ellis from the great State of Texas—[laughter]—and Joan Thomas from Smyrna, Georgia. Their efforts are helping to provide role models and mentors to inner-city girls, to encouraging youth volunteers to work with people with disabilities, to provide computer skills training in local schools and community

centers, and providing college scholarships to underprivileged children.

Today we honor your service. We appreciate what you have done to lift the spirit of the country. We thank you for loving a neighbor just like you would like to be loved yourself. And I join all Americans in congratulating you and wishing you continued success.

And now, Commanders, if you all would read the citations.

[At this point, Lt. Col. Christian Cabaniss, USMC, Marine Corps Military Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

That's it. Thanks for coming. God bless. Appreciate you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dorothy I. Height, chair and president emerita, National Council of Negro Women, Inc.; and A.C. Green, Jr., former National Basketball Association forward.

Statement on the Bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, Iraq

February 22, 2006

On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest condolences to the people of Iraq for the brutal bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, one of the holiest sites in Shi'a Islam. The terrorists in Iraq have again proven that they are enemies of all faiths and of all humanity. The world must stand united against them and steadfast behind the people of Iraq. This senseless crime is an affront to people of faith throughout the world. The United States condemns this cowardly act in the strongest possible terms.

I ask all Iraqis to exercise restraint in the wake of this tragedy and to pursue justice in accordance with the laws and Constitution of Iraq. Violence will only contribute to what the terrorists sought to achieve by this act.

The United States stands ready to do all in its power to assist the Government of Iraq to identify and bring to justice those responsible for this terrible act. And the American people pledge to work with the people of

^{*} White House correction.

Iraq to rebuild and restore the Golden Mosque of Samarra to its former glory.

Proclamation 7981—To Modify Duty Free Treatment Under the Generalized System of Preferences
February 22, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. Section 502 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the “1974 Act”) (19 U.S.C. 2462), authorizes the President to designate countries as beneficiary developing countries, and to designate any beneficiary developing country as a least-developed beneficiary developing country, for purposes of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program.

2. Pursuant to section 502 of the 1974 Act, and taking into account the factors set forth in section 502(c) (19 U.S.C. 2462(c)), I have determined that the suspension pursuant to Proclamation 6123 of April 26, 1990, of preferential treatment for Liberia as a beneficiary developing country under the GSP should be ended.

3. Pursuant to section 502 of the 1974 Act, and having considered the factors set forth in sections 501 (19 U.S.C. 2461) and 502(c), I have also determined that Liberia should be designated as a least-developed beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP.

4. Section 604 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2483), as amended, authorizes the President to embody in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS) of the United States the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including title V and section 604 of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2461–67, 2483), do proclaim that:

(1) In order to reflect in the HTS the restoration of preferential treatment for Liberia

as a beneficiary developing country under the GSP, general note 4(a) is modified by adding in alphabetical order “Liberia” to the list entitled “Independent Countries.”

(2) In order to reflect in the HTS the designation of Liberia as a least-developed beneficiary developing country under the GSP, general note 4(b)(i) is modified by adding in alphabetical order “Liberia.”

(3) The modifications to the HTS made by paragraph 1 of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to articles entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after 15 days after the date of this proclamation.

(4) The modifications to the HTS made by paragraph 2 of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to articles entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after 60 days after the date of this proclamation.

(5) Any provisions of previous proclamations and Executive Orders that are inconsistent with the actions taken in this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., February 23, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on February 24.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Extending Generalized System of Preferences Benefits to Liberia
February 22, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am writing to inform you of my intent to add Liberia to the list of beneficiary developing countries and to the list of least-developed beneficiary developing countries under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). I have carefully considered the criteria identified in sections 501 and 502 of